

## Love on a Leash -- Therapy Dogs Give Lots The CFC Story of the Week -- Week 1

In the wake of the 9-11 terror attacks, an unusual call for help came from managers of the Red Cross national hotline. The stress of trying to comfort and inform callers was taking a toll on the hotline volunteers. After long hours hunched over their phones, the volunteers themselves needed comfort. It wouldn't be an easy job. But one CFC charity leaped to help: [National Capitol Therapy Dogs, Inc.](#) (NCTDI). With wagging tails and bright eyes, the dogs worked their magic and filled the room with smiles. The Red Cross was so impressed, it scheduled visits for the duration.



A young patient in the Clinical Center visits with Willow, who often makes the rounds with owner Linda Solano.

NCTDI trains and certifies therapy-dog-and-owner teams and arranges visits to local hospitals, nursing homes, a mental health facility and other places as needed.

Every Tuesday, teams gather in a lounge on the first floor of the NIH Clinical Center. Five teams were there on a recent Tuesday morning. All the dogs had been freshly clipped and cleaned, so they were the most huggable dogs you can imagine. After being checked out by the CC veterinarian, the teams were given their assignments by recreation therapist, Holly Parker.

A big assignment was given to a fluffy tan and white shih tzu named MG and his owner, Burton Goldstein. They wouldn't be visiting two patients or groups of patients as they usually did. A special little boy was going to have a whole hour to play with MG. The team found him wearing a baggy basketball uniform, through which hints of his recent surgery could be seen. But there was no talk of his operation. He sat on the floor with Parker and Goldstein and petted MG's comforting fur. He soon delighted in getting MG to scamper and retrieve a dog toy. He then jumped at the opportunity to take MG for a walk down the hall and up the stairs to the playroom. There, they met some other kids and two guinea pigs. MG won the battle for attention by jumping over toys in the playroom, demonstrating skills he and Goldstein have developed winning agility competitions.



Burton Goldstein and MG at the Clinical Center

It was all great fun for the little boy, but for Parker important things had happened. He got "the exercise and tactile stimulation" he needed to help him recover from his surgery. The visit also gave back to him some of the simple joy of being a boy.

Goldstein insists that MG and the other therapy dogs enjoy their visits as much as the patients. When MG sees his green therapy harness, he perks up like a box of dog treats has burst open. Goldstein explains, "If the dogs could smile, they would."

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**You can feel the joy of giving too. There are more than 3,000 ways to feel good about helping others listed in the 2002 CFC Catalog of Caring. To find the one just right for you, search the [catalog online](#) or talk with your CFC keyworker.**



Barbara Murgo and  
Rossini at the NIH  
Clinical Center

**Become a Volunteer:** The NIH Clinical Center is always seeking new therapy dog volunteers. Several NIH employees bring their therapy dogs in the evenings. If you have a docile dog that loves people, contact Holly Parker via e-mail [hp21c@nih.gov](mailto:hp21c@nih.gov) or contact NCTDI through its Web site (<http://www.nctdinc.org>) or by phone 301 585-6283.

### **About the CFC Stories of the Week**

Each week of the campaign, we will share a story that shows you how your CFC contribution can touch the lives of people you care about. We will mention a few charities along the way, but there are 3,000 charities in the CFC Catalog of Caring. For instance, there are other charities devoted to animals and therapy dogs, such as [Fidos for Freedom](#) and the [Assistance Dog United Campaign](#). More than one of charities in the catalog can help you make a difference to the causes you believe in. **[We encourage you to consider all the possibilities.](#)**

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